

Hatchet, written by Gary Paulsen, is an adventure book about a thirteen year old boy, Brian, who survives a plane crash in northern Canada. While flying to visit his father for the summer, shortly after his parents divorced, Brian witnessed the pilot having a heart attack. The pilot died and it was up to Brian to safely land the plane. On several attempts, he tried to contact someone via the transmitter, but quickly lost signal. Brian landed the plane in a lake surrounded by woods, with his only tool being a hatchet. He then encountered several obstacles, both extrinsic and intrinsic.

Brian, a city boy who knew nothing about survival, had to rapidly become part of nature. He built a shelter, constructed a fire, and assemble tools for capturing his food. His hatchet became the most central important item to him; all things built were through the use of the hatchet. Another issue Brian had to face was the wildlife. He had encounters daily with the monstrous amount of mosquitoes that would swarm him in the early morning. He came across a bear, a pack of wolves, and a moose, all of which posed a threat to him. Even though this may be true, only the moose caused Brian physical harm. Brian learned to catch fish, rabbits, and birds for food; he also gather both berries and nuts. The adolescent lived through a tornado ripping through his home and battering up his body, as well. Essentially, Brian become a boy of the wild.

Even though there were many extrinsic variables Brian faced, the more serious issues were within himself. Throughout the book, he talks about his hatred for the affair his mother engaged in, and how he kept the secret to himself, although he did desire to reveal it to his father. He had to learn that self pity had no positive effect in helping him survive, so he was forced to grow up and rely on himself. In addition to this, he referred to a teacher how spoke about keeping a positive mentality, which greatly helped keep Brian's spirits up throughout the process, before he was rescued through the use of an emergency transmitter he accessed.

I really enjoyed this book and would definitely use this in my own classroom. Not only is it about survival and relying on one's self, it is very relatable for students. The main character is their age and undergoing many of the same problems a typical teenager feels: divorce, hatred, self pity are all common problems. It is an easy read, but captivates the audience from the first page. Hatchet is most definitely a text I will utilize when executing literature circles in my own classroom.